

Frequently Asked Questions
Learn and Serve Technical Assistance Sessions on November 18 and 25, 2003

November 18, 2003

Q. Regarding the two types of grants [Learn and Serve School-based and Community-based], is one more academic than the other? Or will they ultimately be the same or are they different as far as depth?

A. The Learn and Serve School-based projects has a greater emphasis on academics in the classroom. For example, it could be a good opportunity for the teacher/service learning coordinator to link the subject of history to a service project in that neighborhood. How you craft your project model is up to the school and the community. Conversely, community-based projects will build the service-learning objectives around learning objectives during after-school/out of school time instead of academics in the classroom. For example, a community-based program will be expected to connect their service with learning such as allowing youth to create reflection journals of their service projects.

Q. Could a school and community-based organization be partners in a grant? For example, the school would provide the academic requirement and the community-based organization would provide the service project.

A. Yes, in this case, the school or community-based organization must decide who would apply for grant funding as the legal applicant. If the community-based organization applied for the funding, the community-based organization would not necessarily have to partner with a school, but partnering with a school would be an excellent idea because it would add the value to the grant.

Q. Theoretically would you welcome a proposal from a school and community-based organization?

A. Collaboration is highly valued. School and Community-based partnerships would be wonderful collaboration, however, if they are submitted as two grants and they'd be reviewed separately. They must have separate performance measures and non-duplication of services.

Q. Can a non-profit apply for the school-based and community-based?

A. No. One organization cannot have more than one application in at one time.

Q. If a community-based organization applied and allocated funds in the budget for support to schools, would that be OK?

A. No, funding can not be subgranted to the schools or other community-based organizations.

Q. Approximately how many grants do you anticipate being able to award?

A. DC CNCS has \$36,000 for school based grants up to \$12,000 per award, and has approximately \$200,000 for community-based grants up to 20,000 per award.

Q. Where do faith-based organizations fit in?

A. Faith-based organizations would apply as a community-based organization, however, be sure to read Section 4. Prohibited Program Activities of the Learn and Serve Provisions (found at www.cns.gov website).

Q. Can we nominate youth for the Mayor's Community Service Award whether we receive a grant or not?

A. Yes, nomination forms are available at www.CNCS.dc.gov.

Q. You've been saying after-school (for community-based organizations). Can projects occur during the weekends?

A. Yes, weekends, summer or any out-of-school time.

Q. Can (a community-based grant activity) be during school-time?

A. No, the goals of the grants are to have school-based grant for time during school-hours and community-based grants for after school and out-of-school time.

Q. Can you describe the funding cycle?

A. DC CNCS will award grants on a one-year renewal basis of a 3-year cycle with the possibility for renewal if you meet all requirements.

Q. So April 16-18 (National Youth Service Weekend) could be a big start off but then the service would continue?

A. Yes, the service would continue after National Youth Service Weekend. DC CNCS would not expect a big project on the April 16 in celebration of National Youth Service Day, but DC CNCS does expect all projects to plan to participate immediately after you receive the funding in February.

Q. Will the training be offered at multiple times or coordinated so teachers can attend?

A. The schools would need to make the commitment to do their part so the coordinator or teachers could attend orientation and training. However, the orientation and training schedule will be available at the time of an award.

Toby Horn an attendee at the meeting volunteered to provide a site on user-friendly guide to evaluation. For further information please contact: tobyhorn@erols.com.

Q. What are some examples of planning and implementation costs?

A. Planning and implementation costs are defined in the budget instructions. Basically, the budget narrative should describe how the funds will be used for project planning and the carrying out the project. Staff time for planning can be included as a line item. Also, schools can include stipends for teachers.

In the budget narrative, it is best to be as descriptive as possible with line items. It will strengthen the application in the review process.

Q. The staff time to run the program is a program cost, not an administrative cost?

A. Yes.

Q. Why are administrative costs not allowed? Can it be part of the in-kind match?

A. Administrative costs are not allowed, as stated in the Learn and Serve Provisions. (Page 9 in the provisions). But administrative costs are allowable as an in-kind match.

Additionally, CNCS grant funds cannot be used for food or beverages. (See OMB CIRCULAR NO. A-122. Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations. Section 14. Entertainment costs.)

Q. You can't use it [CNCS grant funds] to feed your children who are doing the service?

A. No. But you can partner with organizations, such as DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, to provide funding for items that are not permitted in this grant as a way to build capacity of an organization.

Q. Will the total amount of the grant increase as the match requirement increases each year?

A. No, the amount of the grant awarded is a one-year renewable for 3-years. The amount awarded would remain the same each year.

If an organization exceeds the minimum match amount, be aware that the amount of match in the budget is what the organization is expected to meet regardless of whether it exceeds the stated minimum.

Q. If I spend money on food, can that be included as match?

A. Yes. Of course, DC CNCS is not opposed to providing refreshments to the children and volunteers in the program. However, it isn't allowed in the provisions. Not allowing grant funds to be used for food is common in federal grants.

Q. Are you applying for one year with the renewable for three?

A. Yes. Your proposal and budget should be for one year.

Q. Is the budget sheet available on Excel?

A. Yes. Upon request DC CNCS will email a copy, and we will post it on the website.

Q. Performance measures as well?

A. Yes. The forms are available in the RFA.

Q. Can we post the PowerPoint presentation on the Website?

A. Yes, we will post the presentation on the website.

Q. Is receiving funds from this grant considered receiving funds from the Corporation?

A. Yes. The funds available from this grant are federal funds provided to DC CNCS from the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Q. Does this conflict if you're an AmeriCorps grantee?

A. No. This grant does not have a requirement that organizations cannot have another Corporation grant.

Q. The Learn and Serve grant provisions on page 9 refer to indirect costs. Who is considered a grantee?

A. The grantee as described in the provisions is DC CNCS. Sub-grantees are organizations applying to DC CNCS. Grant funds cannot be budgeted for indirect costs. The provisions are provided to you as a courtesy for reference of the federal laws. However, please follow the Learn and Serve Guidelines (the RFA) in preparing your grant application.

Q. If you're representing another organization at the technical assistance who must attend the technical assistance sessions?

A. The organization applying for grant funding has to be on the list on the sign-up sheet.

Q. What if you're representing more than one?

A. Please add them to the sign-in sheet.

Q. Do you have to budget \$2,000 for the conference?

A. It is not required, but it's a good idea for professional development of the service-learning provider/teacher.

Q. When is the service learning conference?

A. March 28-31, 2004 in Orlando Florida. Go to www.nylc.org/conference for more information.

Q. Is the curriculum development training provided by your office a curriculum on service learning?

A. The training requirement is for the designated service-learning coordinator or teacher. The type of training will depend on the sub-grantees collective experience; but we are requiring a commitment to attend the training we provide.

Q. Can you put an example on the website? Because I don't understand what end-outcome or intermediate-outcome means.

A. For more information regarding performance measures, the Corporation website at www.cns.gov has a Learn and Serve performance measures toolkit.

Q. Is 12 pages the limit?

A. The RFA has specific instructions on the amount of pages.

Q. Is there a page limit on the budget narrative?

A. No, complete the budget worksheet on page 23 as the budget narrative.

Q. Does the Corporation assign a dollar rate for volunteers so you can use volunteers as an in-kind match?

A. No, use the OMB circular A-122: Cost-Principles for Non-Profit Organizations, Attachment B: Specific Items of Cost, paragraph 12: Donations, which states the following:

(6) (a) Rates for volunteer services. Rates for volunteers shall be consistent with those regular rates paid for similar work in other activities of the organization. In cases where the kinds of skills involved are not found in other activities of the organization, the rates used shall be consistent with those paid for similar work in the labor market in which the organization competes for such skills.

However, the volunteer service generated by the service-learning activities of your grant may not be counted as in-kind match to the grant (the service provided by the “participants”). Volunteer service (either long-term or episodic) provided to your organization in support of this grant may be counted as in-kind match. For example: a part-time, volunteer bookkeeper who does your financial reporting for the Learn and Serve grant.

Q. Does the Commission provide volunteers?

A. No. Greater DC-Cares is the volunteer center for DC, and is a good resource for volunteers. The website address is www.dc-cares.org. The Commission can post your special events and certain volunteer activities on our website if you request that.

Q. Will this affect our eligibility to pay student stipends through the summer youth employment program?

A. DC CNCS does not have information of their requirements. Please contact the agencies for specifics on the eligibility requirements.

Q. On match, does that mean that a non-profit corporation can put up the match?

A. Yes. It cannot be Corporation for National and Community Service funds.

Q. Can you match with both cash and in-kind?

A. Yes.

Q. Are we allowed to contact you, and under what conditions?

A. Because this is an open competition, after November 25, you cannot contact us. We will not answer one-on-one questions. If there is an answer to a question that is unclear, please email us. If it determined an appropriate question as follow up for those who attended the technical assistance sessions, then we will post the answer on our website. We cannot provide individual technical assistance.

November 25, 2003

Q. If community-based organizations are doing in-school and out-of-school projects how do we apply?

A. If a community-based organization has an in-school project during school hours then the project is considered a school-based grant, and the community-based organization will then need to show a collaboration agreement with the school.

Q. You don't have to submit the memorandum of understanding (between the applicant and a partner)?

A. No, the actual document does not need to be included as an attachment. However, an explanation of partnership does need to be described in the narrative of the application. You may be asked to demonstrate evidence of the partnership during the negotiations process.

Q. If your project has a partner organization that will perform the actual recruiting of youth does that count as the applicant doing the recruiting?

A. Yes. That's a good example of getting partners involved.

Q. Is the match 100 percent?

A. No. It's 10 percent for year one, 20 percent for year two and 30 percent for year three.

Q. Are there other guidelines for the budget other than for implementation/planning?

A. Yes, all budget line items are explained in the budget instructions.

Q. How is the budget distributed? Is it a check in advance or reimbursed?

A. Budgets are normally distributed through monthly reimbursements.

Q. Is there a cash advancement that may be received?

A. The 10 percent required match dollars will be seed money to get started. That's a primary purpose of the match requirement.

Q. What's the minimum number of students you should have involved from the school?

A. The guidelines do not state a minimum amount of students, however, a district-wide goal is at least 150 students per year.

Q. What are the administrative costs you can't provide in the grant?

A. The Learn and Serve grant provisions provide more information and guidelines on administrative costs. Please refer to this document for more information.

Q. On page 9, the administrative costs can't exceed 5 percent...

A. The Learn and Serve provisions refer to DC CNCS as the grantee. Organizations applying to the DC CNCS are defined as the sub-grantee.

Q. What do you want in the performance measures boxes?

A. Each performance measures worksheet is dedicated to one of three areas: Needs and Services, Participant Development and Strengthening Communities, identified by an X in the check box. First read the paragraph at the top of the page. This is the target of the performance measure for the entire District.

Q. So, do you want numerical info in there?

A. The boxes should match information from your narrative.

Q. It snows in January. Will the office be open on January 5, 2004?

A. If government is closed due to a publicly declared emergency, then proposals will be due the next business day. If the government is not closed, then proposals are due on that day at 5 pm based on our time/date stamp time. No exceptions!

Q. For community-based programs, are there pros and cons to working on multiple projects or on one project? Or over the course of the year, working on multiple projects or just one project during the year?

A. If your objectives are broad enough, you can still report on each of the projects in a way that makes sense and will be manageable to the organization. If you're trying to work with multiple objectives for multiple projects, then it may not be manageable.

Q. Is the travel for CNCS-sponsored training specifically for the coordinator?

A. No.

Q. Is there stipulation for another student or staff to attend?

A. No. There are no stipulations on who can attend.

Q. Is calling the best way to ask questions?

A. No, please email your questions. Contact Renetta.boyd@dc.gov.

Q. Is the reimbursement policy for schools, or just community-based organizations?

A. The Commission's standard operating procedure for funding grants is on a reimbursement basis. We do have the capability of forwarding grant funds in incremental proportions if all other options have been considered. I would suggest working with the school administrators and the school system to determine if funds can be drawn from a general account and then reimbursed.

Thank you for attending a technical assistance session. Hope to see your proposals on JANUARY 5, 2004, AT 5:00 P.M. PROPOSALS SHOULD BE DELIVERED TO 441 4TH STREET, NW SUITE 1040 S.

APPLICATIONS ARE CONSIDERED LATE AT 5:01 PM